

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-5003

February 10, 2006

Edward B. Knipling, Administrator
Agricultural Research Service
Jamie L. Whitten Building
14th & Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20250

Dear Dr. Knipling:

As we discussed in December, the Arthropod-Borne Animal Disease Research Laboratory (ABADRL), a USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS) research facility located in Laramie, Wyoming should continue to be an important component of our research. The scientists at ABADRL conduct research aimed at protecting the U.S. livestock industry and the public against diseases transmitted by arthropods and insect vectors. ABADRL is one of only five ARS facilities that have the ability to work with livestock diseases in containment. Unfortunately, I am concerned about the recent down-grading of the facility, and would ask for your immediate attention to this issue.


The mission and research conducted at ABADRL is important to the nation's livestock industry and Wyoming. Consequently, ABADRL enjoys a great deal of support from the local community in Laramie and around the state. However, a number of recent events have raised concerns about ABADRL and the future of the facility.

A couple of weeks ago, the biological security level designation of one of ABADRL's two laboratories was downgraded. I have also been made aware that some groups outside of Wyoming have written to your agency encouraging ARS to move the facility out of Wyoming. This effort concerns me as I believe the facility is appropriately located in Laramie, and should remain there.

This is an important issue to my state, and I am asking for your assistance in identifying ARS's future plans for the ABADRL facility. I would especially like to know your plans for the entire facility, including reestablishing the down-graded laboratory to Bio-security Level 3, and for the scope of continued research to be conducted.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Craig Thomas
United States Senator